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ABSTRACT

The goal of European immigrants to the United States was characterized by the "melting pot" image up until the late 1960's. Then a trend of revival of the identity of ethnic minorities changed the slogan to "from the melting pot to the salad bowl." Cultural pluralism and maintenance of native languages became the goals of the movement. The massive school failure of the non-English speaking children led the federal government to legislate bilingual education programs in 1968. When a similar law was passed in Sweden for the Finnish-speaking children, the law was easily implemented. In the United States the autonomy of the states over the educational system has made implementation more difficult, and a Supreme Court decision was necessary to uphold the federal legislation (Lau vs. Nichols). Guidelines, known as the Lau remedies, were then set up by the Office of Civil Rights (HEW). Without such bilingual programs it was found that children lost their native languages without learning English, which led to impairment of cognitive development and school failure. Most of the bilingual education programs in the United States are English-Spanish, and research shows that without exception these programs increase achievement in Spanish reading. Also, achievement in English reading is usually higher than control groups in monolingual programs. They also increase the self-concept scores of the Latino as well as of the Anglo and Black children. (CFM)

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 1977

by Christina Bratt Paulston

The United States has always been a multi-lingual nation, and indeed was characterized by multilingualism long before she became a nation. The many Indian tribes with their diverse languages (from 500 to 600, Chafe 1974: 150) communicated with sign language, pidgins or trade languages like Chinook Jargon, and through interpreters. In later days, the many immigrants from Europe worked hard to learn English and were often so successful that their grandchildren were not able to speak to them in the language of "the old country." At the societal level, no one perceived a language problem; what problematic aspects there were lay in language maintenance, and various forms of private bilingual schools were employed for purposes of mother tongue retention, (Fishman 1966) very often in connection with a local parish. But by 1950, I think it is fair to say that mainstream Americans perceived of the United States as basically a monolingual English speaking country, even if they vaguely knew that Chicanos and Indians might also speak some other language. The experience of the Europeans, who had voluntarily migrated to the United States, was frequently characterized by the "melting pot" image, and their goal was as rapid assimilation as possible. The western Europeans were the most successful at it.

The end of the 1960's saw a trend of revival of the identity of ethnic minorities, both at a cultural and a political level. The successful experience of the Blacks when they showed a united front, the success of the bus strikes and the marches of the Civil Rights movement, was not lost upon the other ethnic minorities; the melting pot became regarded as a myth; and the new slogan was -- and is -- "from melting pot to salad bowl." Schermerhorn

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(1970) points out that ethnic groups that come into contact through annexation or colonalization most often differ in goal orientation from groups who come into contact through voluntary migration. The Anglo superordinate group maintained its goal as assimilation for all, but the annexed Chicanos and the colonized Indians, who knew very well that the United States was a multilingual nation, refused. They wanted to maintain their cultural identity of which language was an integral part, and their goal was cultural pluralism with structural incorporation, i.e. access to goods and services and to social institutions like education and justice. In short, they wanted to retain their values and ways of being without being denied their fair share. Bilingual education in the United States can only be understood if it is seen as a part of a larger political movement which pits the subordinate ethnic minorities, rebelling against economic exploitation, in a power struggle with the dominant majority.

The majority of the bilingual education programs are English-Spanish. The actual situation is far more complicated than Schermerhorn's elegant framework (Paulston 1975) allows for. It is a moot point how voluntary migration is, if the alternative is a bloody revolution as in the case of the escaped middle and upper class Cubans or semi-starvation as in the case of the "wet-backs," the illegal immigrants from Mexico, so called for swimming the Rio Grande in the night to avoid the immigration officers. The Puerto Ricans migrate to New York and Chicago, but there is also considerable back-migration to Spanish speaking Puerto Rico. Consequently many of the children know neither English nor Spanish well and feel ill at ease in both cultures. Their situation is not unlike the Finnish children in Sweden, and in both cases it was their massive school failure which finally forced the authorities to acknowledge the existence of bi/multilingualism, and eventually to legislate into effect bilingual education programs. Unlike the early bilingual education

programs for mother tongue maintenance, the present programs in the United States are seen by the government officials as a more efficient way of teaching the national language.

The Bilingual Education Act was passed in 1968:

> the principal piece of legislation, the Title VII amendment to the 1965 ESE (Elementary and Secondary Education) Act, is designed to meet the needs of children of limited English-speaking ability from low income families, so that these children will gain sufficient proficiency in English to keep up with their mono-lingual English-speaking peers in the educational system. Although the Title VII amendment is often referred to as "The Bilingual Education Act," this is rather misleading, since the long range goal is not bilingualism but proficiency in English. (National Institute of Education 1975:6)

From the legislators' viewpoint, the programs are compensatory in nature, and their objective is a more rapid and efficient acquisition of English; such programs have become known as the transitional model. In spite of the wording of the Swedish curriculum guide:

> Thus the goal of bilingual teaching in comprehensive school should be for the pupils to gain a parallel command of both languages. (National Swedish Board of Education 1975:97)

the number of hours allotted on the schedule for mother tongue instruction makes it very unlikely that such a goal can be achieved, and the Swedish programs are similarly transitional in nature. (Johannesson 1975; Willke, 1975) Nevertheless, the actual situation in the United States differs profoundly from the Swedish. When Kungliga Skolöverstyrelsen makes a decision, that decision is handed down and implemented around the country. In the United States, the states have autonomy over their educational system, and it necessitated a Supreme Court decision to uphold the Bilingual Education Act in the famous Lau vs. Nichols case in which a Chinese parent sued the school board of San Francisco. In 1974 the Court ruled in favor of Lau:

> for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.

Subsequently, the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) appointed a task force which worked out a set of guidelines for implementing the Lau decision, the so-called Lau "remedies," which have caused considerable furor. The constant excuse given by school administrators who don't want to implement bilingual education programs in their schools is that the children don't need it as they have an ESL (English as a Second Language) program. So, the Lau "remedies" state again and again that an ESL program is not acceptable in a bilingual education program. People involved in ESL have taken this to mean that the children are not to be taught English. The "remedies" do end with a footnote which states that an ESL component is an integral part of a bilingual education program, and most certainly the task force never meant that the children were not to learn and be taught English. The Lau "remedies" can only be understood as a political document, and is the perfectly understandable reaction of minority group members who have seen the only real advances to their people come through political action.

The Lau "remedies" are implemented by the Lau Centers which serve under HEW. The federal government does have indirect control over the states through the allocation of federal funding (total HEW expenditures on Bilingual Education and/or ESL projects for fiscal year 1973 amounted to nearly $67 million, DHEW 1974), and school districts which are judged out of compliance with the Lau decision stand the risk of losing all their federal funding, a most powerful argument for the implementation of bilingual education and one not even the most conservative school board is willing to fight. And so, little by little, the programs are being implemented across the country, but in many cases it is clearly a legal-political process rather than just pragmatic-educational as in Sweden.

Understandably, the implementation of the programs by unhappy and unwilling principals is accompanied by considerable strife in some districts.

Principal is the closest equivalent to the Swedish rektor, and as a group they have considerable power to support or sabotage the programs. Sometimes the objections of the principals are justified. For reasons which are unclear, the mandate for bilingual education has been taken to imply bilingual teachers. There are very few -- or at least not enough -- perfectly bilingual teachers, and as a result , in order to comply with the Lau decision , the children get saddled with teachers who are fluent in their mother tongue but who have poor command of English. Of course the children don't learn English, and this is the situation the Chicago principals, who are ordered to implement bilingual programs this fall, object to.

Sweden has avoided that mistake, and it has not occurred to anyone to have an immigrant Yugoslav teach the children Swedish, a situation which I think nicely illustrates the difference between bilingual education in the two countries.

The U. S. programs, like the Swedish, may legally be transitional in nature, but the major proponents for them, especially those members of the ethnic groups involved in implementing the new directives, invariably refer to the programs as bilingual/bicultural and see the objectives as stable bilingualism with maintenance of the home culture as well as the home language. So far, as the NIE report points out "the Guidelines for the Title VII programs have been interpreted loosely enough" (National Institute of Education 1975:6) to allow for maintenance programs, as they are known, as well as for transitional programs. In general, it is considered a crucial point in maintenance programs to have teachers who are members of the same ethnic group as the children, an ideological rather than a pedagogical consideration. I don't think anyone has really stopped to consider the consequences of such policies on the children's English language acquisition, but it is a matter we are going to have to deal with. As a Latino official put it, the remedy is worse than the illness.

Bilingual education changes the requirements of teacher competencies, and many programs are accompanied by chronic teacher strife as tenured Anglo teachers get fired in a job market without jobs in order to make room for bilingual teachers. It is understandable if the principals grumble, but the typical rejoinder is "the shoe is on the other foot now," meaning the ethnic minorities have long known what it is to be denied access to jobs, and now it is the Anglos' turn. It is very much a confrontation of interest groups in competition for scarce jobs, and from this viewpoint it is comprehensible that the ethnic minority members choose not to consider their proficiency in English.

An Arkansas principal is reputed to have commented on bilingual education in these words: "If English was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for you." Even if principals don't hold that view, many still see no need for bilingual education. For many of them, English was good enough for their grandparents, who managed well enough in the schools. It is an honest query on their part. The Finnish data (Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa 1976) is extremely interesting and important in this regard. The notion of halvspråkighet is slowly becoming known since I first introduced the concept in the United States in a paper in 1974, and interestingly enough, it is considered much less controversial here than in Scandinavia. The major argument for bilingual education here, as in Sweden, is that teaching the children in their mother tongue is a more effective way of teaching them the national language. I think this is true only under certain socially definable circumstances; however, the circumstances for many of the Spanish-speaking American children are similar to those of the Finnish children in Sweden. In addition to low social class, prejudice, and other social aspects, their situation is characterized by rapid language shift in which the children lose the mother tongue faster than they learn the national language. The Chicano children in contradistinction to the Finnish children come from a highly

verbal culture. Yet the Redwood City data (Cohen et al. 1976, discussed in Paulston, 1976) seem to document the loss of Spanish of the children in the monolingual English program as compared with its development in the bilingual program.

Cummins, in a fascinating article on "The Influence on Bilingualism on Cognitive Growth: A Synthesis of Research Findings and Explanatory Hypothesis" speculates that the lower level of verbal intelligence by the bilingual subjects in the earlier studies (Darcy 1953) "may be a reflection of the fact that they are likely to have had less than native-like competence in both their languages." (1976:36) Cummins hypothesizes that "the level of linguistic competence may mediate the effects of his bilingual learning experience on cognitive growth." (p. 37)

In other words, the bilingual's level of competence in L_1 and L_2 is posited

> as an intervening variable in the causal chain between cognitive development and more fundmental social, attitudinal, educational and cognitive factors. Specifically, there may be a threshold level of linguistic competence which a bilingual child must attain both in order to avoid cognitive deficits and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to affect his cognitive functioning. Bilingualism and unilingualism can both be thought of as instruments which individuals use to operate upon their environments. Because of its greater complexity, the bilingual instrument is more difficult to master, but once mastered has greater potential than the unilingual instrument for promoting cognitive growth. (Cummins 1976:37)

The Finnish data on the connection between Finnish-language skills and grade in mathematics, even though it was taught in Swedish, (Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa 1976:69) support Cummins' conclusion, I think. So does Gonzales-Moreyra and Aliaga's (1972) study in which bilingual Quechua children achieved lower test scores on concept formation tasks than did two control groups of children monolingual in Spanish and Quechua respectively. In Hymes' words, they "give up Quechua before they learn Spanish," (Hymes 1974:72) an accurate

enough description of similingualism. The evidence increasingly points to a situation in which social circumstances cause children to imperfectly develop their mother tongue at the same time as they imperfectly learn another language, and this condition of linguistic competence, in the Scandinavian literature referred to as halvspråkighet, becomes the mechanism for impairment of cognitive development, which in turn leads to school failure. We may not be able to measure semi-lingualism, (Skutnabb-Kangas 1975) but we certainly can observe as well as measure its effect on the children's school achievement. It is a powerful argument for mother tongue nurturing and bilingual education, and one

that the principals are willing to consider seriously.

The findings of the research studies on bilingual education programs around the world are notoriously diverse, and one rarely turns up the unanimous findings which seem to be the case with the Finnish children in Sweden. The very agreement is a strong reason to pay careful attention to the findings. Probably for lack of access to funding, we have no similar body of literature in the United States, where most available program evaluation research is to be found in doctoral dissertations. I recently had occasion to examine these findings, and rather to my surprise turned up considerable agreement of results. The U. S. bilingual education programs without exception increase / achievement in Spanish reading when compared with control groups of Spanish-speaking children in monolingual English programs. In seven studies, the bilingual program children did better in English reading and/or subject matter achievement than the controls; two studies found no difference; one study found that the children in an ESL program did better; and finally one study (on Indian children) favored the traditional English program. The dissertations often omit an exact description of the programs, and the negative results may well be due to a curious fashion of teaching, employed in some programs, where the teacher will speak one sentence in Spanish, then repeat the same sentence in English, the so-called "concurrent translation" approach. There is increasing evidence that this is not a useful approach and that it is important to keep the two codes well separated, one from the other.

The programs increase the self-concept scores of the Latino children, and that is true for the Anglo and Black children in the programs as well. One program for Indian children failed to raise their self-concept, probably a comment on their dismal situation. I can make no sense, however, of the

findings on achievement in mathematics. It seems that skills in mathematics do not transfer across languages as do literacy skills in reading. (I still do computation in Swedish.) It seems that maybe mathematics should be taught from the very beginning in the language in which the children eventually will be expected to perform.

To summarize, bilingual education in the United States today is a matter of federal law; the process of implementation reflects the socio-political situation. Slowly the children are coming to have an education which is an affirmation of their language and culture, an enormous task in a country as large and as multifarious as the United States. But we will get there. And finally, I will let the children themselves have the last word on bilingual education: "uno tiene mas opportunidad de aprender ingles sin necesidad de avergonzarse." (Velasquez 1973:151) "One has a better opportunity to learn English and without the necessity to feel ashamed and make a fool of oneself."

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